

The Lou Douglas Network

By Todd Jackson

We should straighten out a few basic things up front.

There are fifteen thousand men, maybe fifteen thousand and one, who are many selves of the same man, and they're flung out wide across space.

They can communicate with each other, and also with the database they all share, through a chip the size of a dope-pipe's copper screen, that's grafted on at the base of the bottom neckbone. They can communicate across tens of thousands of light-years before degradation in the signal makes it break up into just static. Within this range, their signals are precise to where one of them can wrap around a superstring, like a vine, and, through a process we won't get into just now, can make lightspeed look like standing still.

Once there, on the other side, the signal will grab hold a wheelbarrowful of local dust and debris, and remake it grit by grit into dedicated universal assemblers. These universal assemblers begin to grow; first they grow in generations of complexity and specialization. Then, at a certain point, they begin to grow in numbers.

Eventually they build the next Lou Douglas, out of themselves, and in this new place-- whatever new place it might be. He's made of human tissue like any human, when in repose; but his cells are built from nanobots, not naturally occurring molecules.

In the manual, (not included), he's called a "Von Neumann Probe Series G." The relationship any Probe has with other selves is known as a Network. Lou Douglas is no longer the name of simply a man, but of at least fifteen thousand, and growing.

There aren't as many of 'Cedes Incarnacion; she's a bit new at this. Still, The Lou Douglas Network and The 'Cedes Incarnacion Network are married. Any Lou, any 'Cedes, any time, any place, forever.

Here's what we can't do.

While signals can pass through hyperspace, and while with these signals we can even build as nuanced a material form as a living human being, and even from tens of thousands of ly away, we can't actually move matter from one place, through hyperspace, to another place. There is no hyperspace travel, in short. Starships, forget all that. Only communication, and remote construction, can be done through hyperspace. For any material object, and that means anybody, to voyage just from one near star to another is an affair of years.

That'll do for now. If you want, you can think on this a while before getting started, but otherwise, here we go.